140.

AN ESSAY ON THE LIFE OF *DAVID GREGORY*, D.D.

LATE

DEAN of CHRIST-CHURCH,

OXFORD.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

Dr. *David Gregory*,

LATE

Dean of Chriſt-Church, &c.

IN taking a View of Dr. Gregory, it is not our purpoſe to go through a minute detail of all the early immaterial events of his hiſtory, but to take a ſhort and general ſurvey of him in the laſt ſcene of his Life.

It is a ſorry truth, that mankind in general ſeem too much addicted to obloquy and detraction: perſons every

where abound, whoſe ſole happineſs ſeems to conſiſt in raking up, out of the whole circle of a man's actions, ſome little unfavourable circumſtance or other, which, though perhaps in itſelf indifferent, may by artfull malice be ſo magnified, and ſplendidly exhibited, as to appear in a very diſadvantageous view: they malevolently ſpread it out, like a cloud, over all his actions, and endeavour to make that, which Charity ſhould conceal, the one ſtriking object, to which our eyes are principally directed. What man's Virtue can ſcreen him from reproach, while ſuch perſons are attended to? They are generally indeed ſoon known and deſpiſed;

ſpiſed; but yet they often do a great deal of miſchief before they are diſcovered.

It is our wiſh therefore, that a few things be ſaid briefly of Dr. Gregory, to prevent thoſe who did not know him, from being miſled by any evil inſinuations, ſuggeſted to them by his enemies.

It may be proper to obſerve, that an extreme Tenderneſs and Affection for his Children is the firſt great feature of his Character: when we turn our eyes upon him, this catches our immediate attention, and ſhines out in ſuch

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an amiable light, as to ſpread a beauty and luſtre over all his actions: there all the genuine goodneſs of his heart was eminently diſplayed: in his affectionate fondneſs for them, was mingled every Virtue of the Soul: thoſe who knew him, gazed ever with admiration upon all thoſe amiable qualities, which in him united, to form the Kind and Virtuous Parent. But it will be aſked, Was this benevolence confined to his Family alone? No, it was diffuſive and general; was too much mingled in his nature, to be partial or confined; and may be compared to the fruitfull ſtream, which, breaking away into a thouſand branches, without impoveriſhing

poveriſhing itſelf, ſpreads riches and beauty wherever it flows. Witneſs the various acts of generoſity which he exerciſed, while he was Maſter of Sherborne Hoſpital near Durham, among the poor Old Men of that Society: they bleſs his name to this hour, and talk of him with ſuch a pious zeal, and warmth of gratitude, that there is no one, who has heard them ſpeak of him, but has felt his boſom glow with a deſire of doing the ſame good deeds, to merit the ſame gratefull remembrance.

He did not ſhamefully confine them, as heretofore, to the literal allowance, which

which, good as it might have been when anciently ſettled on them by their Founder, was now become a ſad and ſcanty pittance; but as far as it was in his power, made them enjoy the ſenſe and ſpirit of the Benefaction: he opened his hand, and generouſly ſpread bleſſings among them, and made their old hearts to ſing for joy. But his benevolence to them was not confined to private acts of kindneſs alone; he was always upon the look-out to ſee where he could adminiſter any general aſſiſtance; his own eye was always the quickeſt to diſcover where any grievance was to be redreſſed, or any deficiency ſupplied, though

though it was to be done at his own coſt: he did not think it ſufficient to make his poor old men to live, but was always contriving how to make them live happy too, and ſpend the ſmall reſidue of their days in all the little comforts which he was able to beſtow upon them.

And here we have a memorable inſtance of his goodneſs and generoſity; an inſtance, which will put the ignorant aſperſors of his name, if any ſuch there be, to the bluſh. He demoliſhed all the little wretched huts, in which they were huddled together before, more like beaſts than men, and generouſly

nerouſly erected for them, at his own proper expence, a handſome commodious Stone Edifice; making it to conſiſt of twenty different apartments, that each of the Old Men might have one entirely to himſelf. They now live comfortably and commodiouſly, each in his own little ſeparate room, breathing gratefull Prayers to Heaven for their Benefactor.

Neither are they hereby, though divided thus into ſeparate apartments, condemned to ſolitude, and the life of hermits; that would have been a very unnatural inſtitution for him, above all men, to have thought of, who was himſelf the deareſt lover of chearfull Society.

Society. He found them indeed in that ſtate, and deprived of all friendly intercourſe, not having any place allotted them, in which they might occaſionally and promiſcuouſly meet together: but it was his particular care, that they ſhould not be left in the ſame forlorn condition; for he conſtructed a large room, in the centre of the edifice, for their common reception, and comfortably provided it with every neceſſary accommodation: ſo that when they want company, they meet together round the ſocial hearth, and tell their old tales; when they feel thought and reflection kindling within them, they have now a retirement,

to which they may betake themſelves, and where, without interruption, they may ſit down to indulge meditation. Thus they find themſelves in the moſt comfortable condition imaginable, and inſtead of repining at, bleſs Heaven for thoſe misfortunes, which through Dr. Gregory have proved the very means of their happineſs. Many other ſtriking inſtances of the humanity he ſhewed in this place, might be preſented, were any thing further intended, than to give a rough ſketch and a general idea of his character.

We may go on therefore to ſee in what manner he acquitted himſelf at

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Chriſt-Church. Here a ſcene, wide and diffuſive, ſpreads itſelf open. In this, we are to obſerve, an act of geroſity diſtinguiſhes almoſt his firſt appearance.*

His converſation in every branch of Polite Literature, his remarkable knowledge of the Modern Languages, by ſtudy and travel acquired to a ſurpriſing degree of excellence, rendered him ſo famous throughout the univerſity, that when that profeſſorſhip became vacant, he was repreſented to his late Majeſty as the Man moſt perfectly qualified to ſucceed; and ac-

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* As Canon, he having before been Student of Chriſt-Church.

cordingly had the honour of being appointed, by his Majeſty, Profeſſor of the Modern Languages. This office he enjoyed for ſeveral years, and filled it, during the whole time, with high fame and reputation. For the better Propagation of the Languages, in which he very zealouſly concerned himſelf, he introduced ſeveral expert Foreigners into the univerſity as Teachers, and encouraged them out of his own purſe, until they had eſtabliſhed themſelves there to their ſatisfaction. This unuſual attention did him great honour; but the manner in which he perſonally intereſted himſelf in theſe affairs, did him much more. He was ever free

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of acceſs to all who wanted to conſult him on any difficult point, and never diſmiſſed them leſs ſatisfied with the information they had obtained, than charmed at the polite affability with which he had received them.

Upon his Preferment at Chriſt-Church, he choſe to reſign his Profeſſorſhip, lucrative as it was, with a view that it might fall into the hands of ſome one, to whom he hoped the emolument might be of greater and more immediate ſervice. This however, extraordinary an inſtance of his generoſity as it may appear, bore but the common ſtamp of all his other actions.

Being

Being now ſituated at Chriſt-Church, he began immediately to employ his thoughts upon a variety of ſuch Improvements, as might tend to the honour and advantage of the College: but here he ſucceeded beyond his own moſt ſanguine expectations, and ſo far exceeded the original plan he had laid down to proceed upon, that at his death, Chriſt-Church in every view ſeemed finiſhed into the moſt conſummate perfection.

As to the external improvements, they are too numerous, all to be recited. It was he who brought that ſpacious old Quadrangle, out of a ruinous, neglected

glected ſtate, into the magnificent form in which it now appears: he raiſed the Terraſs there, made the Long Walk, and conducted the Plan for the Anatomy Theatre: to him that noble Hall, the pride of the univerſity, owes all its ſtate and magnificence: but the Library, ſo greatly admired for its elegance and grandeur, perhaps of all does him the greateſt honour; the ſhell is from an Italian model; but the whole of the internal part was executed entirely according to his taſte and direction*.

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* Some of theſe things were done by him while he was Dean, others while he was Canon.

When this undertaking was at length completed, and all the books brought together from the Old Library and the different parts of the College where they had been repoſited, and were now diſpoſed into proper order, he immediately opened a free acceſs, to all the Noblemen, Graduates, and Gentlemen Commoners of the College, giving them the unlimited uſe of more than twenty thouſand books, and the liberty of taking any, not exceeding a certain number, away with them to their own chambers. The care and ſuperintendency of the whole he committed to two learned Gentlemen, Senior Students of the College, appointing under them

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two Juniors to attend the common buſineſs of the Library.

Engaged as he was in theſe various ſchemes, which ſeemed neceſſarily to engroſs all his attention, he was ſtill revolving in his mind a purpoſe more admirable and excellent than all the reſt, and more eſſential to the Intereſt and Honour of the Society.

The Plan of Study, however excellent it might have been, as no doubt it was, when centuries back it was firſt eſtabliſhed, he now found to have become infinitely too ſuperficial and contracted; for Literary Knowledge being

in theſe times ſo generally diffuſed through mankind, as that it is leſs an honour to have it, than ſcandal to be without it, ſo he found the Youth of his College more animated than heretofore with a deſire of breaking through, and exploring into all the myſteries of Learning. This ardor indeed was the leſs to be wondered at, when we conſider that they came moſtly out of the hands of one of the moſt learned men of the age*, who had warmed their imagination with the enchanted ſcenes he had occaſionally pointed out to them, and to which he had directed their flight, and given them wings to ſoar with.

Dr.

* Dr. M——.

Dr. Gregory therefore, upon theſe conſiderations, but principally from his own zeal for the advancement of literary knowledge, broke up the old plan, and ſelecting out from it whatever things he therein found good and uſefull, wrought them in together with his own admirable materials, and framed at length a Syſtem of Study, the moſt regular, the moſt beautifull, and the moſt extenſive, that was ever propoſed to the youth of the univerſity. It comprehends all the Claſſics, Poets and Hiſtorians, Logic, Mathematics, Philoſophy, Divinity, and the ſeveral branches which ſpring from them; in this, all the parts are ſo curiouſly and ſo beautifully arranged, that the various

gradations and tranſitions from one to the other are ſmooth and natural, and ſeem, like the colours of the rainbow, imperceptibly to riſe out of each other; ſo that the progreſs through the whole ſcheme, formidable as it may appear, is in truth found to be both eaſy and entertaining.

Thus the Youth of that College, in the courſe of four years, go through the whole circle of Early Learning, and lay a broad and laſting foundation to build their future ſtudies upon.

But in order that this Plan, which cannot however be got through without good ſtudy and application, ſhould ne-

verthelefs be properly executed, the Young Men are obliged to make their appearance, at the end of every Term, in the public Hall, and there pafs an examination, in the ſeveral portions allotted them, before the Dean, the Sub-Dean, and all the other Officers of the College. The fear of not appearing in this conſpicuous ſituation to advantage, or rather the noble ambition of appearing ſo, it muſt be naturally ſuppoſed, excites all their induſtry and all their pains. Such, in ſhort, is the State of the College, and the nature of the exerciſes, that in it Idleneſs cannot exiſt, or good Parts lie concealed; the ſparks of Genius, wherever they are hid, are ſure to be ſtruck out, and cheriſhed into

into a flame: and as thoſe who have a real concern for their improvement, and wiſh in earneſt to become Scholars, may if they pleaſe, having every advantage poſſible, become perfectly ſo; ſo thoſe who are of a nature cold and indifferent, cannot, if they would, paſs through the eſtabliſhed courſe of ſtudy, without acquiring, in ſpite of their indifference, very great and extraordinary advantages.

The four annual Prizes for Compoſition, which are alternately offered to be contended for, one year in Proſe by the Batchelors, the other in Poetry by the Under Graduates, are other great incitements to emulation. The prizes

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each year are Fifty Pounds, and are given, according to the merit of the exerciſe, in books to the value of Eighteen, Fourteen, Ten, and Eight Pounds. Theſe prizes were given by that great Benefactor Doctor Leigh, and are indeed no further to the honour of Doctor Gregory, than for having been eſtabliſhed in the College by his Friend while He was Dean, though perhaps not altogether without his advice and influence.

Among all theſe inſtitutions and improvements, there is yet one which does him great honour, and deſerves particularly to be mentioned. It had hitherto been uſual for the young Noblemen

blemen, and Gentlemen Commoners, who reſided there, to purſue their Studies privately altogether in their own chambers, without ever coming forth and appearing in any public ſort of exerciſe.

Though he was not a foe to cuſtom, yet he was quick in diſcerning the errous of it, and ſtrenuous in amending them: this conſequently ſtriking him as a defect, he reſolved to repair it, by introducing ſome manly, uſefull, and agreeable ſort of exerciſe, in which they ſhould now and then make their public appearance. It was determined therefore, that two, one on each ſide of the queſtion, ſhould, every week in Term time, declaim upon ſome Hiſto-

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rical ſubject; that the Declamations ſhould be written in the Engliſh language, and publicly recited in the Hall of Chriſt-Church. An Inſtitution this, which, for its great uſefulneſs and propriety, cannot ſufficiently be admired.

Thus all the members of the College, until they take their Degree, (after which they are left without much interruption to prepare themſelves for that particular ſphere of life, into which they are now about to enter) are all, from higheſt to loweſt, variouſly employed in the ſame buſy ſcene.

In this excellent ſtate did Doctor Gregory leave Chriſt-Church. His

name, no doubt, will deſcend with honour to poſterity, and ever, within thoſe ſacred walls, be remembered with gratitude and reſpect.

That chearfull eaſy affability, for which he was ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhed, gained him the love and affection of all around him; which contributed very conſiderably to his inſtitutions taking root ſo readily, and in ſo ſhort a time, flouriſhing ſo ſucceſsfully: abroad, he conducted himſelf with that dignity, which his ſituation, as Governor of a great College, neceſſarily required; though, under his own roof, he ſtripped himſelf of it all, and became, to every one indiſcriminately, the eaſy

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and familiar companion: he conducted himſelf, in ſhort, throughout, in ſuch an admirable manner, that he was not only loved and eſteemed, but honoured and reſpected: and as he was in his life, moſt ſincerely valued, ſo was he in his death, truly and univerſally lamented.

But never was loſs ſo happily and ſo providentially repaired as this was. Upon the death of that excellent good man, the eyes of all were immediately turned upon Dr. Markham: him they earneſtly wiſhed to ſee at the head of their Society, and him, to their great and inexpreſſible joy, they ſoon beheld there. They were gratified beyond all

credit at the event, and delighted in him as their Good Genius and Guardian Angel. He approved of the noble inſtitutions of his worthy Predeceſſor, and thought that he could not any way do the College more eſſential ſervice than in ſupporting them. This indeed was a Taſk which required his utmoſt attention; for, though they had proſpered and thriven hitherto with all poſſible ſucceſs, they ſtill were but in their infancy, and needed much care and protection: in ſuch a ſtate, happy was it for the College, that they were committed into ſuch hands as his.

But here we muſt not omit to mention, to the honour of Dr. Markham, that,

that, beſides ſupporting and improving all theſe eſtabliſhments, a buſineſs alone ſufficient to engage his care, he has himſelf made ſome great and material additions.

He has appointed five Perſons of learning and abilities, to read public Lectures in the College, during the Terms, upon the following ſubjects; Ethics, Mathematics, Logic, Hiſtory, and Divinity: an inſtitution, which does him infinite Honour, and which is highly characteriſtic of the noble, and extenſive genius of its Author. The Lectures upon Divinity to be begun next Term, are to be read on Sunday evenings, and are intended to be upon

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an incomparable Plan, calculated at once to give the Youth a clear and comprehenſive view of the truth and nature of their Religion, and to enable them to anſwer all the objections of Papiſts and Infidels.

This is the ſtate into which theſe two great and good men have brought Chriſt-Church: and that it may long flouriſh, an honour to them and their Country, is the hearty wiſh of

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